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## Youth Vital Signs Results

The Saint John Region • April, 2013

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# Youth Vital Signs

— Saint John —

A Project of the Greater Saint John  
Community Foundation

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“This job of keeping our children safe and teaching them well is something we can only do together, with the help of friends and neighbors; the help of a community...

This is our first task, caring for our children. It's our first job. If we don't get that right, we don't get anything right. That's how, as a society, we will be judged.”

—Barack Obama

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## Executive Summary

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In the spring of 2012, the Saint John Region was provided with funding from the TELUS Atlantic Community Board and the Greater Saint John Community Foundation to undertake our first ever Vital Signs Report focused solely on youth aged 13-18. A dedicated group of teens identified eight components of our region to check-in on, which we called Indicators. Over the course of two months, youth from Belleisle High to Harbour View High and everywhere in between were provided with opportunities to voice their opinions on the status of the eight Indicators.

The eight Indicators were: (1) Health & Wellness, (2) Belonging & Community, (3) Employment & Education, (4) Arts & Recreations, (5) Homelessness & Poverty, (6) Crime & Safety, (7) Transportation, and (8) Environment

In attempts to gather qualitative data and get the teens thinking about their community in relation to the Indicators, a social media campaign was launched in October 2012. Every week a video was uploaded to Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube showcasing an Indicator and teens were encouraged to share their opinions, positive or negative. We were able to gather a wealth of information and insight into the thoughts and experiences of youth in our city.

In late November 2012, we launched our survey in all of the high schools in our area. Participation rates surpassed any other city in Canada and what resulted was a detailed look at how youth view Saint John, how youth feel about growing up in Saint John, and what needs to be improved.

## Highlights

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### Who the survey respondents are:

- Students were surveyed, from 11 different High Schools (Belleisle, First Steps, Hampton, Harbour View High School, Kennebecasis Valley High School, Rothesay High, Saint John High School, Samuel De Champlain, Simonds, St Malachy's, Woodlawn)
  - ➔ 8% don't expect to graduate from high school "on time"
- 52% are Male
- 48% are Female






## What they do:

- 32% work part-time
- 35% volunteer
- 62% participate in an organized sport or recreational activity
- 33% participate in after-school activities at school (music, art, youth groups)
- 33% participate in after-school activities in the community

## How they see life in our region:

- 67% said yes, the right schools and training opportunities are available in the Saint John region for them to get the education and training they want
- 46% said they are able to pursue their dream career in the Saint John region
- 32% said they see themselves living and working in the region 10 years from now
- 59% said they think our region is a great place to be a youth
- Students were asked to rate their physical well-being, mental well-being and quality of life, their responses for were as follows<sup>1</sup>:

### C+ Physical Well-Being

Response	Chart	Percentage
Excellent		22%
Very good		35%
Good		31%
Fair		10%
Poor		2%

### C+ Mental Well-Being

Response	Chart	Percentage
Excellent		20%
Very good		36%
Good		27%
Fair		13%
Poor		5%

### B- Quality of Life

Response	Chart	Percentage
Excellent		23%
Very good		40%
Good		26%
Fair		9%
Poor		2%

<sup>1</sup> To formulate the final grades we assigned each rating a number value, calculated the mean grade and used a letter grade scale.

Excellent	4	A
Good	3	B
Average	2	C
Below Average	1	D
Fail	0	F

## Indicator Scores

The same method was used to calculate the indicator grades as was used for the overall grades for physical well-being, mental well-being and quality of life. Once a mean grade was calculated, it was translated into a letter grade to give you a report card of the indicators.

### Health and Wellness **C**

The top two priorities that students identified for improving Saint John's grade in this area were:

- Cheaper options for sports and exercise 38%
- Increase exercise and sporting opportunities 35%

### Belonging & Community **C**

The top two priorities that students identified for improving Saint John's grade in this area were:

- Engage the youth voice 37%
- More opportunities to volunteer 33%

### Employment & Education **C**

The top two priorities that students identified for improving Saint John's grade in this area were:

- More employment opportunities for teens 52%
- Higher quality summer jobs 36%

### Arts & Recreation **C+**

The top two priorities that students identified for improving Saint John's grade in this area were:

- Lower costs for recreation opportunities 35%
- More all-ages concerts 32%

### Homeless & Poverty **D**

The top two priorities that students identified for improving Saint John's grade in this area were:

- Options for free meals 46%
- The Creation of a youth shelter 44%

### Crime & Safety **C-**

The top two priorities that students identified for improving Saint John's grade in this area were:

- Bullying prevention 40%
- More education regarding drugs and crime 33%

## Transportation **C**

The top two priorities that students identified for improving Saint John's grade in this area were:

- More bus service between towns outside of city (i.e. Hampton & Grand Bay) 35%
- More free parking options/lower parking fees 35%

## Environment **C-**

The top two priorities that students identified for improving Saint John's grade in this area were:

- More community clean ups 43%
- Stricter rules for industrial pollution 41%

## Overview

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- The mean ratings given for physical well-being, mental well-being and quality of life were all between 'Good' and 'Very Good'. Interestingly, self-reported mental well-being was lower than self-reported physical well-being, with 6% more students grading it as 'Fair' or 'Poor'.
- Of the eight indicator scores, Homelessness and Poverty and Environment received the lowest scores, while Arts and Recreation received the highest—followed by Transportation and Belonging & Community which had almost identical mean scores (2.24 and 2.23 respectively).
- Although it did not have the highest score overall, Belonging and Community received the fewest grades of "Below Average" or "Fail" out of the eight indicators.
- The Youth surveyed identified Employment & Education and Homelessness & Poverty as the two most important indicators for improving the Saint John Region.
- The five most selected priorities for the individual indicators were: 'more employment opportunities for teens' (52%); 'options for free meals [for people facing poverty and/or homelessness]' (46%); 'creation of a youth shelter' (44%); 'more community clean ups' (43%); 'stricter rules for industrial pollution' (41%).
- 'Bullying Prevention' was a close sixth, with 40% of students surveyed selecting this response. Comments and concerns regarding bullying also came up in other subject areas such as Health and Wellness and Belonging and Community. Thus,

although some students acknowledged that bullying prevention is having a positive effect, it is an area that needs continued attention.

- According to Statistics Canada, in January of 2013 Youth unemployment in New Brunswick was 20.1%—for males it was 26.3%. The severity of the situation is reflected in the fact that ‘more employment opportunities for teens’ was the only priority selected by over 50% of respondents.

## Moving Forward

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For its annual report this year, Community Foundations of Canada focused solely on youth issues. The data they came up with “told a story of massive economic, demographic and social shifts that have dramatically altered the landscape for Canadian youth”. And, they discovered a major issue: “the predictable trajectory that guided the lives of the current generation’s parents is gone. Canada’s youth are growing up in an era of complexity and uncertainty that has delayed, or even destroyed, the landmarks that once signaled a transition from one phase of life to another”.

The Saint John Region’s Youth Vital Signs project started as a way to check in with our youth, and hear what they have to say. The survey questions, indicator areas, and priorities were put forward by youth in our community. The results make it clear that action is needed, but the responses also highlight many things that are working well and they are a testament to the value and insight of our youth’s voice—the Youth in the Saint John region are enthusiastic, capable and eager to be involved in shaping the future of their city. That youth in the Saint John region are committed members of our community is again illustrated by the fact that the participation rate for our survey in Saint John was significantly higher than those of other cities.

This survey was not undertaken to get these results and stop there; this is only the beginning of a long process to improve these grades! There is much work to be done, but it can be done together, as a community. And with its strong sense of community and its organizations, Saint John already has a strong foundation from which it can move forward.

Please visit our website [www.vitalyouthsj.ca](http://www.vitalyouthsj.ca), ‘Like’ our Facebook Page (<https://www.facebook.com/YouthVitalSignsSJ>), follow us on Twitter (@VitalYouthSJ), and check out our YouTube videos.

